



Hasanaginica

What's so white upon yon verdant forest?
Snow perhaps it is or swans assembled?
Snow would surely long ago have melted.
And a flight of swans would have departed.
No! not swans, not snow it is you see there,
 'Tis the tent of *aga*, Hasan-aga;
On his couch he lies, severely wounded.
And his mother seeks him, and his sister,
But for very shame his wife is absent.

When the misery of his wounds was softened,
Hasan thus his faithful wife commanded:
"In my house thou shalt abide no longer—
Thou shalt dwell no more among my kindred."
When his wife had heard this awful sentence,
Numbed with dread she stood and full of sorrow.
When outside she heard the tramp of horses,
To the highest window of the tower
Rushed the faithful Hasanaginica,

Would have thrown herself into the courtyard,
But her two beloved daughters followed.
Crying after her in tearful anguish—

"Do come back to us, oh, mother, mother!
These are not our father Hasan's coursers,
'Tis our uncle Pintorović coming."
Then, returning, Hasanaginica
Threw her arms in misery round her brother—
"See the sorrow, brother, of thy sister:
He would tear me from my helpless children."
He was silent—but from out his pocket.
Safely wrapped in silk of deepest scarlet.
Letters of divorce he drew, and bid her
Seek again her aged mother's dwelling—
Free to win and wed another husband.
When she saw the letter of divorcement,
Parting-kisses on her two boys' foreheads,
On her girls' red cheeks she pressed in sorrow.
But she could not tear herself from baby
Crowing at his mother from the cradle.
But at last her brother with an effort
Tore the mother from her tender infant,
Put her close behind him on his courser.
Hastened with her to the white-hued homestead.

But a short while dwelt she with her people—
Not a single week had been completed,
When a host of suitors wooed the lady
Of a noble family the flower;
One of them Imotski's mighty *kadija*.
Said the noble lady, trembling greatly,
"I entreat thee, I implore thee, brother,
Do not give me to another husband.
For the sight of my poor orphan'd children
Sure would break the spirit of thy sister!"

Little cared her brother for her sorrows;
He had sworn she should espouse the *kadija*.
Then his sister asked of him a favour:

"Write on snow-white paper, O, my brother.
To the *kadija* as a bridal message,
'Friendly greetings from the youthful woman.
And she begs thee bring her as a present.
When thy wedding-guests and thou art coming
Hither to her peoples' white-hued homestead,
Such a long and flowing veil that passing
Aga's home she need not see her orphans.'

When the snow-white letter reached the *kadija*,
All his wedding-guests he called together,
And set out with them for his betrothed,
Future mistress of his white-hued homestead.
Safely reached he with his friends her dwelling;
Happily were all returning homeward,
But when they were passing *aga's* homestead.
Her two daughters saw her from the window.
Her two sons came out, and from the portal
Called to her, "Come hither! O, come hither!
Take thy night's repast with thine own children!"

Sadly Hasanaginica heard them;
And she said to him who led the party,
"I should be most grateful to you, captain.
If you kindly halted the procession
While I give some presents to the children."

So they stopped at the beloved portal.
Presents gave she unto all the children.
To the boys, high boots with gold embroidered;
To the girls, long and resplendent dresses;
And a silken garment to her baby.—

Near them sat their father, Hasan-aga,
And he called in sorrow to his children,
"Come to me, poor children! to your father.
From your mother do not hope for pity.
Callous is she, cold and stony-hearted."

Hasanaginica, when she heard this.
On the ground she fell all pale and trembling.
And her spirit left its earthly prison
At the glances of her orphan children.

Anonymous XVIIth century Croatian Islamic ballad
translated by Maximilian August Mügge.